fault lines

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Summary

When Ash woke up all he could feel was the pain. It was hot and overwhelming, and he knew he couldn't do anything about it.

Nothing really worked anyway, it only dulled it slightly. Not that he could do them now. Not when he was busy that day. Fuck.

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Ash has chronic pains, and that is pretty much the fic

Notes

excuse the brief tags, I'm posting this on my phone(again) which means I can only put in the tags marked common yada yada.
Plus, obligatory reminder that this is the characters not the ccs, thank you
anyway, chronic pain fics because I'm projecting and there are none(except for like the one I wrote).
ALSO shoutout to my beloved friend parker gor helping me, and also my beloved friend osh for letting me get you into swagdoons.
this has glitch ash, which is fun.

hope you enjoy

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

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He slowly blinked his eyes open, the room still drowned in darkness. He could barely make out his own body as he adjusted to it, though the purple glitches running down his back and just above his hips were very visible.

His shoulders were constrained slightly, and when he looked down to see why, he realized he never took off his – now wrinkled – suit last night. God damn it, he was a mess. He didn't know how he was gonna survive doing anything today.

He grits his teeth and pushes himself upright, ignoring how his body screamed in protest. He wished the pain would finally finish the fucking job. The only thing keeping him going was his morning routine and need to survive, though one of them was easier than the other.

As he started the fire and prepared the water, he could only really focus on the pain. Every twist of his back sent a strum of pain up his spine, and he could hardly bend over without having to bite his tongue to stop from making a noise. It was only when his water stopped boiling and he put the tea bag into his mug could he finally relax, albeit only a little.

You could never truly relax on lifesteal, and even in the comfort of his own home – base, more of – Ash didn't feel safe. That's why he never spoke of his pain, or let himself show any signs he was feeling it. No one could know why the glitches always lingered around his back, or why he never could strain himself too hard. He wouldn't let them.

He drank his bittersweet tea hot, not sparing any time trying to cool it. It was meant to calm nerves, he couldn't tell if it worked.

By the time he finished his tea, sunlight was filtering through the windows and his last sip was cold. He lumbered over to his somewhat hidden brewing stand and grabbed one of his premade healing potions, just to try and dull the pain for a bit.

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It was a mistake to try and fight.

His health potion had long worn off and holding all of his supplies was weighing on him. His shoulders and back were searing hot, and he couldn't stand anything at all. It felt like his entire body was engulfed in the glitches, and the only thing he could do was pray no one noticed.

After barely surviving the battles, he stumbled over to somewhere by spawn. At least he thought it was. He figured it was safe enough to sit down there. If he were to get killed, at least the ache might calm down. He hoped so at least.

He couldn't think from the way the staticky pain pounded at his every nerve. All background noise got blotted out as he tried to think of anything else.

What time it was when somebody finally interrupted him, Ash couldn't tell you. It was only when

he felt hands shaking his shoulders did he realize someone was saying his name.

"Ash, Ash are you alright?" He couldn't tell who was saying it, barely registering a deep voice.

He just blinked his eyes at the person, trying to take in who it was.

"You're a lot more, uh, glitchy than usual." And it finally clicked that it was Red. So people did notice, then.

"What of it?" He mumbled, stumbling over his words. He didn't realize he was panting beforehand until it was too hard to breathe.

"Clearly something is wrong." Red's hands were still on his shoulders. He doesn't care to remove them.

"Does it matter?" Ash knows he can't get away with this any longer, but goddammit he's gonna try.

Red laughed in surprise, "Yes, it does."

"Why the fuck do you care?" It's not like anybody else would care, in fact, most would kill him at any sign of weakness. So why was Red any different?

"Because this clearly is more than just getting scratched up from a fight. Now, what happened?" His voice was genuine, and Ash hated how it made him feel. He was not letting his guard down around anyone anytime soon, but especially not Red.

"Nothing happened."

"Who are you trying to fool here?"

Ash looked up at him and glared, "It's not my fucking fault I'm in pain all the time, alright?"

He faltered, just a bit, "You're what?"

Fuck.

"I– it doesn't even matter, anyway."

Red's grip tightened on his shoulders, "Seriously Ash, what do you mean?"

He could tell this was not being let go anytime soon. Well, shit.

He reached to pull the hands off of his shoulders, only for his hands to be taken instead. He sighed, "I don't know why you care so much."

"Because this is clearly an issue, what do you mean you're in pain all the time?"

Some part of Ash really wanted to run away. Sure, he's known Red for a while, but he still couldn't understand him. He couldn't tell what he wanted, and that scared him. He wanted hearts, power, and riches, yet around Ash, he acted… different. He didn't know how to feel about that. It's not like he wanted to address his own feelings about it. Not when they made him feel so vulnerable.

"I mean, I'm in pain all the time."

Red huffed, "No fucking shit, but that is not a normal thing, Ash."

"Look, I don't know why you care so much, alright? Most people would just kill anyone they saw that vulnerable but here you are. Why are you so concerned?"

He hesitated, and tightened his grip on Ash's hands, "I wasn't just gonna kill you when you were sitting there shaking like a leaf and covered in more glitches than I've seen before, I'm more concerned about that than a free heart."

"But you shouldn't be."

"Yet here I am, so either suck it up and accept I care or go get killed by someone else."

He had to admit, Ash was a bit taken aback by that. Though he really didn't want to dwell on it for too long, lest his own feelings get to him. "I just have a lot of back pain, that's all."

Red thought for a moment, studying Ash a bit closer. He squirmed a bit as he felt his face heat up. "Is that what the glitches are, then?"

"Yeah, they are."

"Why was it so bad today?"

Ash let out a bitter chuckle, "It built up from everything, but it also was just bad already."

"Is there any way that you can stop it?"

Ash chuckled, more fond this time, more fond than he really intended to. "You almost sound like you care."

And Red smirked in response, and it felt almost fulfilling, "Maybe I do, sue me."

"See you in court, then."

It all felt too lighthearted, too kind, but he felt that just for a moment he might be safe.

End Notes

kudos and comments are appreciated greatly.

It's over 1k which is great, I've been writing a lot of short fics recently

title is a mountain goats song

Works inspired by this one the wisp sings by Anonymous

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